[17th September 1958

APPENDIX :

[Vide answer to starred question No. 20-A asked by Sri K. Balasubramanya Ayyar at the meeting of the Legislative Council held on 17th September 1958, page 285 supra.]

On the 30th of July 1958, some of the workers of the " Hindu " struck work. The strike was called off on the 10th of August 1958. During the period between the 31st of July and the 5th of August there was picketing of the office of " The Hindu " by the workers on strike. The following statement gives an account of the steps taken by the Government to maintain law and order during the strike period :—

On the 29th July 1958, the management of " The Hindu " dismissed a Lino-operator named Balasundaram, who is also the Vice-President of " The Hindu " Office and National Press Employees' Union. According to the Management, the dismissal was a punishment for his refusal to obey orders relating to change of shift. A section of the workers of " The Hindu ", numbering about 460, struck work at 9 p.m. on the 30th July, as a protest against this dismissal, which, they alleged, was a case of victimisation for trade union activities.

On the night of 30th July 1958, the strikers assembled in groups in front of " The Hindu " office with the object of preventing the loyal workers from going in for work. Information about this was given to the police at about 9-30 p.m. and a police party was rushed to the spot. At about 11-15 p.m., the strikers obstructed a van belonging to " The Hindu " office bringing in loyal workers, beat the driver, pelted stones at, and caused some damages to, the vehicles. They also threw brickbats and stones on the police party on duty, causing injuries to them. As the strikers behaved in an unruly manner, a lathi charge was ordered and eight persons were rounded up. A case under sections 147, 332 and 323, I.P.C., was registered by the police. Three policemen were injured as a result of the stone throwing. Six of the strikers were injured as a result of the lathi charge. They were treated in the General Hospital.

On the afternoon of 31st July 1958, the strikers picketed in front of " The Hindu " office in a peaceful manner. A police party was present at the spot to prevent untoward incidents. No incidents were reported.

The next day, i.e., 1st August 1958, at the request of the Management, sufficient bandobust was provided for the distribution of papers at " Vani Mahal " and Luz Corner, the two main distribution centres and this bandobust was continued throughout the period of the strike. In addition, bandobust was also provided at the Distributing Agent's house in Mylapore. There was peaceful picketing at the office of " The Hindu " on that day. Slogans were shouted, but no employee was prevented from going to work

nor was anyone threatened. No case of assault was reported in the night. The despatch of parcels from the office was carried on as usual. A feature of this day's picketing was that the members of the Simpson Group Company Employees' Union also joined the strikers in shouting slogans.

Peaceful picketing continued on the 2nd of August also. The usual police bandobust was provided. A complaint was made by Sri Gurunathan, Sports Editor of " The Hindu " that he was assaulted in a lane adjoining " The Hindu " office. He could not identify any of his assailants, though he stated that they were employees of " The Hindu " on strike. A case under sections 341 and 323, I.P.C., has been registered and it is under investigation. No other complaint was lodged with the police.

On the 3rd of August, the strikers were joined by the workers of Simpson and Co., " The Mail ", The Express Newspapers. Oldhams Battery Company and members of the T.N.C.C. Labour Wing. The picketing was peaceful. Adequate precautions were nevertheless taken by the police. Attempts by strikers to obstruct vehicles entering or leaving the office were prevented by the police. The Assistant Commissioner of Police, Southern Range, who was present on the spot provided police escort for the Managing Editor, Sri K. Srinivasan, to enable him to leave the office. No incidents were reported on this date.

On the 4th August 1958, there was an increase in the number of demonstrations, who were joined by workers from the Simpson Group Companies, as it was a holiday for them. Adequate police precautions were taken.

Vehicles entering and leaving the office were as usual given the necessary facilities. Attempts to mob two cars carrying the Editor and Manager were averted by the prompt intervention of the Police.

Sri Parthasarathy, Assistant Edior, preferred a complaint at 3-30 p.m. at Triplicane police station that he was prevented by the crowd from entering " The Hindu " office at about 1-25 p.m. The police tried to trace the miscreants, but did not succeed.

Sri K. Narasimhan, Assistant Editor, complained that he was prevented by the strikers from entering the office at about 1-30 p.m. Enquiries were made by the police about this but the miscreants could not be traced.

On the evening of that day, packets containing " The Hindu " intended for despatch by rail were taken from " The Hindu " office in lorries. Three of the lorries left the premises without any interference. When the fourth lorry was taken out at about 6-50 p.m., the crowd in front of the office suddenly set upon the driver and others who were inside the lorry and assaulted them with the result that the driver and others sustained minor injuries. The lorry was also damaged. The police officials who were on

duty on the spot intervened promptly and prevented further damage. The injured were sent to the hospital in a police ambulance.

In connection with the above incident, the police have registered a case under sections 342 and 323, I.P.C., in the F-1 Chintadripet police station. The case is under investigation. Three of the accused have been arrested.

At about midnight on the 4th, a message was received by the Government from Sri K. Srinivasan, Managing Editor, that he felt unsafe to leave the office without police bandobust. Under instructions from the Government, the Commissioner of Police accompanied by the Deputy Commissioner of Police (Law and Order) immediately proceeded to "The Hindu" office. On reaching there, they learnt from the Inspector on duty that though an assurance of sufficient bandobust and escort was given to Sri Srinivasan by the Inspector, the Managing Editor was unwilling to leave the premises unless the Commissioner of Police went there. Sri Srinivasan informed the Commissioner of Police that he had requested the presence of the Commissioner of Police in "The Hindu" office not for the purpose of escorting him home but for giving an assurance to the loyal workers that protection would be given to each of them. Sri Srinivasan also told the Commissioner of Police that the morale of the loyal workers was breaking down and requested him to address the workers and to encourage them to continue to work. The Commissioner of Police declined to do so, stating that it was no part of his function to address loyal labourers to continue to work. Sri Srinivasan then decided to suspend publication of "The Hindu" and left the office.

On the 5th August 1958, at the request of the Management, police escort was provided for the transport of 38 employees at about 9-30 a.m. In regard to the remaining employees numbering about 200, the management wanted them to be transported in police vehicles, as they had no vehicles at their disposal. Arrangements were, therefore, made to secure the required number of vehicles and by about 3 p.m. all the workers were able to leave the office.

I would also like to add that the policy of the Government in regard to the maintenance of law and order, where picketing by labour is involved, has been established for a long time. The Government have always had and continue to have primary responsibility in regard to maintenance of law and order. This responsibility includes not only protection of life and property against violence of any kind, but also maintenance of traffic and the normal life of the community. At the same time, the forces of law and order at the disposal of Government are not to be utilised for the suppression of strikes or picketing, provided they are peaceful and in strict consonance with the laws and regulations. There has been no deviation from this policy in the present case.